

North Dakota Organic Facts

From the North Dakota Department of Agriculture

Organic farming has been one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. agriculture for more than a decade. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, North Dakota had a total of 159 certified organic farms in 2005. Currently, North Dakota ranks second in the number of certified organic cropland acres.

As is common with organic production practices, North Dakota organic food is grown by working with nature. By recycling Earth's natural materials, North Dakota producers are able to maintain soil fertility and encourage natural methods of pest and disease control.



These organic field peas are planted alongside a newly planted farmstead windbreak, which provides additional protection on an organic farm in central North Dakota.

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NRCS Organic Initiative:

Advancing Organic Agriculture in North Dakota



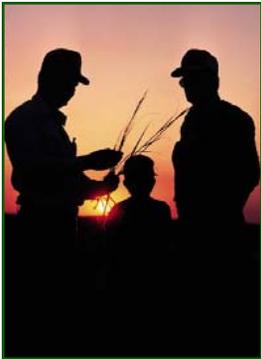
Frank Kutka, NDSU



Helping People Help the Land

EQIP Organic Initiative

Organic agriculture is defined by the USDA as a production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity and biological activity, which is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on



management practices that restore, maintain, and enhance ecological harmony.

Organic crops are raised without using conventional pesticide, petroleum-based fertilizers, or sewage sludge-based fertilizers. Organic crops cannot be genetically engineered. Moreover, animals raised on an organic operation must be fed organic feed and given outdoor access.

NRCS introduced the Organic Initiative, a nationwide program under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), to encourage more producers to take part in organic production and enhance existing organic farmers' environmental stewardship. This initiative is part of the 2008 Farm Bill where organic farming was designated as a priority.

The Organic Initiative provides financial assistance to implement priority conservation practices designed to improve natural resource conditions.

Am I eligible to participate in the EQIP Organic Initiative?

Producers eligible for the EQIP Organic Initiative include those who agree to develop and carry out an organic system plan (OSP) or develop and implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an OSP. Included in this are certified organic producers and producers who are transitioning to become certified organic. Eligible producers also include producers who fall under the exemption category in the National Organic Program (NOP) regulation.

In addition, producers may apply for a Conservation Activity Plan—from which they would receive financial assistance for attaining an OSP from a certified technical service provider.

“Assisting organic producers is a priority for the 2008 Farm Bill as well as for Secretary Vilsack and the Obama Administration. The objective of this initiative is to make organic food producers eligible to compete for EQIP financial assistance.”

**- Ag. Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan
May 2009**

There are two separate enrollment options for applicants—one for producers transitioning for the first time and one for certified organic producers transitioning additional land or adding additional conservation practices.



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Is financial assistance available through the EQIP Organic Initiative?

Fifty million dollars in financial assistance and associated technical assistance has been allocated to the EQIP Organic Initiative during FY 2011. Agricultural producers who apply for the Organic Initiative will be ranked based on the practices they plan to implement on their farms and how they address priority issues and natural resource concerns. Applicants could receive up to \$20,000 per year, but are limited to \$80,000 over a six-year period.

The NRCS is currently accepting applications for the Organic Initiative. The national application cutoff date for the Organic Initiative is **May 20, 2011**.

Those interested in applying for the Organic Initiative can contact their local NRCS field office or visit www.nd.nrcs.usda.gov.



All programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis.